

Record of Decision Overview

Fact Sheet—Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area, Colorado

What project is impacted by the Record of Decision?

On January 9, 2017, the Bureau of Land Management finalized a Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan for the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area. These documents provide the framework for managing about 210,000 acres that were designated as the Dominguez-Escalante NCA by congress in the 2009 Omnibus Public Lands Management Act. To protect the important resources of the NCA, the RMP guides management of Geological and Paleontological Resources; Vegetation and Soils; Wildlife and Terrestrial Habitat; Aquatic, Wetlands and Riparian Areas, and Water Resources; Cultural Resources; Wilderness; Lands with Wilderness Characteristics; Visual Resources; Recreation; Science and Education; Livestock Grazing; Transportation and Travel Management; Lands and Realty; Special Designations including Wild and Scenic Rivers, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern; National Historic Trails and Socioeconomics. To learn more about the RMP, click [here](#).

What determinations were made in the Record of Decision?

The Proposed RMP selected sections of each alternative from the Draft RMP to form a Proposed Plan Alternative. The ROD confirms the Proposed Plan with some minor modifications as the best combination of management actions for the NCA. In addition to Special Recreation Management Areas, Extensive Recreation Management Areas, Wilderness, Special Designation and Travel Management as outlined below, the ROD includes:

- protection for the Old Spanish National Heritage Trail corridor and off-site interpretation opportunities;
- protection for wilderness characteristics in two units outside of the designated Wilderness and Wilderness Study Area, including Dry Fork of Escalante and Cottonwood Canyon;
- hunting continues to be allowed throughout the NCA consistent with state of Colorado regulations; and
- livestock grazing is an important traditional use of the area and was specifically allowed in the unit's designating legislation. The NCA will continue to be managed for healthy grazing that meets land health objectives commensurate with the NCA's special resources.

How Does the RMP Manage for Recreation?

The RMP creates three Special Recreation Management Areas focused on quality recreation experiences including the Gunnison River SRMA featuring non-motorized float boating and camping, the Cactus Park SRMA featuring motorized trail use and camping as well as the Escalante Canyon SRMA featuring heritage wildlife tourism, education, ecological resources and picnicking.

The RMP formed four Extensive Recreation Management Areas to protect specific recreational opportunities including the Ninemile Hill ERMA to protect equestrian and hiking opportunities; the Sawmill Mesa/Wagon Park ERMA (including Escalante Triangle Recreation Management Zone) to protect motorized and non-motorized trail use, mountain biking, dispersed camping, big game hunting and backcountry auto touring; the East Creek ERMA to protect auto touring and climbing as well as the Hunting Ground ERMA to protect motorized and non-motorized trail use, dispersed camping and interpretation on the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.

What wilderness values are emphasized in the RMP?

Under the RMP, the Dominguez Canyon Wilderness Area will be divided into zones to emphasize different wilderness values. All zones will be managed to protect the Wilderness's naturalness and untrammeled nature.

- Wilderness Zone 1 (Lower Big and Little Dominguez canyons) will be managed with an emphasis on supplemental values (cultural resources and threatened and endangered species).
- Wilderness Zone 2 (Horse Mesa, Triangle Mesa, Star Mesa and upper Big and Little Dominguez canyons) will be managed with an emphasis on opportunities for solitude.
- Wilderness Zone 3 (the southeastern portion of the Wilderness) will be managed with an emphasis on opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

What special designations were included in the RMP?

One river segment, Cottonwood Creek, is identified as suitable for Wild and Scenic River designation. All other segments are released from eligibility. The Escalante Canyon and Gunnison Gravels Areas of Critical Concern will be affirmed and expanded. The Escalante Canyon ACEC will also be designated as a watchable wildlife area where there are exceptional opportunities to view wildlife and objectives focused on interpretation and education. Two new ACECs – River Rims and Gibbler Mountain – will be designated to protect rare plants and paleontological resources. The NCA's Hunting Ground area will be designated as the Old Spanish National Historic Trail management corridor and managed for related auto-tour interpretive opportunities along State Highway 50 and county roads.

Was a Travel Management Plan done in conjunction with the planning process?

The RMP includes a Travel Management Plan, which identifies appropriate uses for 742 miles of roads and trails in the NCA. The majority of routes will be open for motorized vehicle use, while others are designated to provide specific recreational opportunities such as hiking and biking or closed to protect sensitive resources.

What type of public input was considered?

As directed by the legislation, the RMP was developed with extensive public involvement. In addition to formal comment periods and open houses, the Dominguez-Escalante Advisory Council met 37 times during the development of the RMP and all meetings offered opportunities for public comment. The various views of stakeholders and the advisory council provided valuable recommendations that the BLM incorporated into the RMP.

What are the next steps?

The BLM will utilize the RMP and ROD and work with partner organizations to manage the natural resources within the Dominguez-Escalante NCA.

Where can I get more information?

To review the Record of Decision and associated documents, go to <http://1.usa.gov/1qKkMVi>.